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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 IGA-02 IO-13 EB-08 OMB-01 COME-00
TRSE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 SP-02 /049 W
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 0643

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAID, LE, ACRI
SUBJECT: ACTIVITIES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON'S HIGH RELIEF COMMISSION

1. SUMMARY: DR ASSAD RIZK, MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SPOKE BEFORE THE FIRST MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH RELIEF COMMISSION(HRC) ON FEB 3. HE SAID THE HRC HAS "A LIFE OF PERHAPS ONE YEAR" AND A TWO-STAGE MISSION: FIRST, TO DISTRIBUTE EMERGENCY AID; AND, SECOND, TO INITIATE SHORT-TERM RELIEF PROJECTS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED MANY PROBLEMS, INCLUDING INEQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF GOODS AND A LACK OF RELIABLE STATISTICS. HE NEVERTHELESS CLAIMED THE HRC: A) WOULD COMPLETE AN "EXTREMELY PRECISE" SURVEY OF 800,000 PEOPLE IN TWO MONTHS; B) COULD STORE LARGE QUANTITIES OF GOODS; AND C) HAD 300 DISTRIBUTION CENTERS. HE ANNOUNCED A COMPLEX ORGANIZATION FOR THE HRC, INCLUDING A SECRETARIAT GENERAL AND AN INSPECTION DEPARTMENT. ON FEB 5, HOWEVER, THE HEAD OF THE ICRC MISSION IN LEBANON CALLED THE HRC'S PLANS FOR A STATISTICAL SURVEY A FARCE, ITS CLAIM OF 300 DISTRIBUTION CENTERS A GROSS EXAGGERATION, AND ITS COMPLEX ORGANIZATION A SHAM. WE BELIEVE IT IS TOO EARLY TO JUDGE IF HRC WILL BECOME AN EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION. END SUMMARY.
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2. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, ON DEC 15, 1976, THE GOL FORMED A HIGH RELIEF COMMISSION (HRC), WHICH IS CHAIRED BY DR. ASSAD RIZK, THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFARIS, AND WHICH IS CHARGED WITH COORDINATING ALL EMERGENCY AID EFFORTS IN LEBANON. THE HRC HAS BEEN MEETING REGULARLY SINCE ITS FORMATION.

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ON FEB 3, HOWEVER, THE COMMISSION CALLED THE FIRST MEETING OF ITS ADVISORY COMMITTEE, WHICH INCLUDES REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE UNITED NATIONS, VOLUNTARY AGENCIES, AND THIS EMBASSY. DR RIZK MADE THE FOLLOWING REMARKS TO THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING:

3. GOALS. THE HIGH RELIEF COMMISSION HAS A "LIFE OF PERHAPS ONE YEAR." DURING THIS TIME, THE COMMISSION HAS A TWO-STAGE TASK. THE FIRST STAGE INNVOLVES THE DISTRIBUTION OF EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROPER. THE SECOND STAGE INVOLVES "SHORT-TERM DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS" DESIGNED TO HALP PEOPLE ACQUIRE THE MEANS OF EARNING A LIVING WITHOUT GOVERNMENT ASSISSTANCE. THE HRC CAN ONLY INITIATE SUCH PROJECTS; THE NEWLY CREATED RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD IS EXPECTED TO CARRY THEM THROUGH.

4. PROBLEMS.
A. DR RIZK SAID THAT THE DISTRIBUTION OF RELIEF IN LEBANON HAS ENTAILED MANY PROBLEMS. RELIEF GOODS HAVE APPEARED ON THE BLACK MARKET. AT TIMES, UNDESERVING PEOPLE HAVE RECEIVED AID, WHILE NEEDY PEOPLE HAVE NOT. NO EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE TO COORDINATE THE ACTIVITIES OF RELIEF AGENCIES. THE GOL HAS BEEN UNABLE TO: 1) DETERMINE HOW MUCH AND WHAT TYPE OF AID WAS DELIVERED IN 1976; AND 2) DEVELOP RELIABLE STATISTICS ON THE PRESENT NUMBER AND LOCATIONS OF NEEDY PEOPLE. MOREOVER, NO FUTURE LIST OF NEEDY PEOPLE CAN BE RELIABLE FOR MORE THAN ONE MONTH, BECAUSE OF CONTINUAL
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POPULATION MOVEMENTS.
B. MOST OF THESE PROBLEMS HAVE EXISTED BECAUSE THE GOL COULD NOT INSURE SECURITY OVER ITS TERRITORY. NOW, HOWEVER, THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED, AND "THE STATE'S AUTHORITY IS INCREASING FROM DAY TO DAY."

5. PLANS. GIVEN THE LACK OF RELIABLE STATISTICS, THE HRC HAS ALREADY PREPARED A PRINTED QUESTIONNAIRE, WHICH THE ARMY COMPUTER CAN PROCESS, FOR RECORDING, INTER ALIA, A PERSON'S PLACE OF ORIGIN, EMPLOYMENT STATUS, EDUCATION, AND PHYSICAL CONDITION. THE HRC WILL NEED ABOUT TWO MONTHS TO COLLECT THIS INFORMATION, AFTER WHICH IT WILL HAVE AN "EXTREMELY PRECISE STUDY" OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AT LEAST 800,000 PEOPLE.

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ACTION NEA-10

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6. THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES.
A. THE HRC RECOGNIZES THE RIGHT OF THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES TO ACT "INDEPENDENTLY." HOWEVER, THEY "ABSOLUTELY MUST COORDINATE THEIR ACTIVITIES" WITH THE HRC. THIS WILL AVOID MANY PROBLEMS, INCLUDING VIOLATIONS OF LEBANESE LAW. LAST YEAR, FOR EXAMPLE, THE GOVERNMENT WAS FORCED TO IMPOUND COLZA OIL IMPORTED BY ONE VOLUNTARY AGENCY, BECAUSE SUCH OIL IS ILLEGAL IN LEBANON.
B. TO BEGIN WITH , THE AGENCIES MUST PROVIDE THE HRC WITH DETAILS OF THEIR AID ACTIVITIES LAST YEAR, TO INCLUDE THE TYPE, DATE AND AMOUNT OF COMMODITIES DELIVERED. IN ADDITION, THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIEES MUST HENCEFORTH TELL THE HRC THE TYPE OF GOODS THEY DISTRIBUTE, THE LOCATION OF THEIR WAREHOUSES AND THE NAMES OF THEIR BENEFICIARIES. FROM NOW ON, THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES MUST BRING IN GOODS ONLY THROUGH THE PORT OF BEIRUT.

7. CAPABILITIES. THE COMMISSION ALREADY HAS "CONSIDERABLE MEANS" FOR STORING GOODS AND CAN HANDLE "MORE THAN YOU CAN GIVE US." IN ADDITION, THE HRC ALREADY HAS MORE THAN 300 DISTRIBUTION CENTERS IN ALL AREAS OF LEBANON EXCEPT THE SOUTH. THE HRC HOPES TO
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OPEN 250-300 CENTERS IIN THE SOUTH "WITHIN A FEW DAYS."

8. ORGANIZATION. THE HRC OVERSEES TWO SEMI-AUTONOMOUS SUB-COMMITTEES: A SUB-COMMITTEE FOR MEDICAL AFFAIRS

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WHICH WILL COORDINATE EMERGENCY PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMS, AND A SUB-COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS, WHICH WILL USE THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COOPERATIVE CREDIT UNIONS TO MAKE EMERGENCY LOANS TO FARMERS. IN ADDITION, THE HRC HAS:
A. AN EXECUTIVE ARM, WHICH IS THE OFFICE OF SOCIAL DEVELOOPMENT (OSD). THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF OSD, MEHDI SADEK, IS THE HRC'S VICE-CHAIRMAN. THE OSD WILL MANAGE REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION CENTERS AND HANDLE LOGISTICAL MATTERS FOR THE HRC.
B. AN OFFICE OF ADVISORS, STAFFED BY MILITARY OFFICERS EXPERT IN LOGISTICS AND CARTOGRAPHY. THESE OFFICERS WILL GIVE ADVICE ON SUPPLY MATTERS AND HELP THE ARMY CARTOGRAPHIC SERVICE PREPARE "120 MAPS" SHOWING POPULATION, SHCOOLS, HOSPITALS, MEANS OF PRODUCTION AND OTHER DATA BY REGION.
C. A SECREATRIAT GENERAL, HEADED BY EMILE DIRANI, AND INCLUDING MOUSSA GEDEON, SECREATRY OF THE CHAIRMAN, AND HABIB KHAWAJA, SECREATRY OF THE HRC.
D. AN INSPECTION DEPARTMENT, HEADED BY ASSAD CHARARA, STAFFED BY CAREER EMPLOYEES OF THE CENTRAL INSPECTION COUNCIL. THESE EMPLOYEES WILL RESPOND TO CITIZENS' COMPLAINTS AND OVERSEE THE REGULARITY OF THE HRC'S ACTIVITIES IN ALL FIELDS.
E. AN OFFICE OF RECEIVING AND STORAGE, HEADED BY MICHEL JORR. THIS OFFICE INCLUDES A BUREAU OF RECEIVING, HEADED BY FAWZI HAJJ ALI, AND A BUREAU OF STORAGE, HEADED BY GABRIEL GHORAVEB.
F. AN OFFICE FOR COORDINATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES, HEADED BY HESHAM AL-HAJJ.
G. AN OFFICE OF INFORMATION AND STATISTICS, HEADED BY JEAN MOURAD.
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H. AN OFFICE OF DISTRIBUTION, HEADED BY MRS. NIIMATE KANAAN.
I. AN EXPERT ON HOUSING, DR CAMILLE KOBEH, THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF COOPERATIVES. END UNCLASSIFIED.

9. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. COMMENT: ON FEB 5 ICRC DIRECTOR JEAN HOEFLIGER SPOKE WITH DERISION OF THE HRC. HOEFLIGER SAID THE HRC'S ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORTS WERE A SHAM, ITS PLAN TO MAKE A DETAILED STATISTICAL SURVEY A FARCE, AND ITS CLAIM OF 300 DISTRIBUTION CENTERS HIGHLY EXAGGERATED. EXPERIENCED UN OFFICIALS HAVE ALSO EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM ABOUT EHE GOL'S ABILITY TO MANAGE A COMPUTER-BASED STATISTICAL SURVEY. WHILE IT IS TRUE, AS THE MINISTER HIMSELF ADMITS, THAT THE GOL'S RELIEF PROGRAM HAS BEEN WEAK AND DISORGANIZED, WE BELIEVE IT IS TOO EARLY TO JUDGE HOW EFFECTIVE THE NEW HRC MAY

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BECOME. WE NOTE IN PASSING THAT THE ICRC AND OSD IN GENERAL, AND HOEFLIGER AND SADEK IN PARTICULAR, HAVE ENJOYED NOTICEABLY POOR RELATIONS. END COMMENT.
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